



April 27, 2015

*Testimony in opposition to:*

- L.D. 1066 An Act To Provide for the Licensing of a Casino Owned by the Maliseet Tribal Government on Tribal Lands in Aroostook County*
- L.D. 620 An Act To Allow Veterans' Organizations To Own and Operate Slot Machines*
- L.D. 1213 An Act To Ensure Fair Competition by and between Maine's Commercial Tracks*
- L.D. 1280 An Act To Provide Income Tax Relief by Expanding Gaming Opportunities*
- L.D. 1283 An Act To Stimulate Economic Development and Create Jobs by Amending the Laws Governing Gaming*
- L.D. 1357 An Act To Implement the Findings of the WhiteSand Gaming Study*
- L.D. 1346 An Act To Establish a Comprehensive Gaming Policy*

Senator Cyrway, Representative Luchini and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans & Legal Affairs, I'm John Porter, president and CEO of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce representing more than 800 businesses and organizations in the Penobscot Valley.

I'm here today to urge you to reject all the proposals before you that would expand gaming in the state of Maine. As you know, Bangor is home to Hollywood Casino, one of two casinos in the state operating after statewide voter approval permitting their creation.

Our facility in Bangor dates back to 2003 when voters approved the first-ever slot machine operation in Maine in a proposal billed as a way to help finance a comprehensive vision for redevelopment of Bangor's downtown and Main Street corridor.

That vision, as you know, has become a reality. Today, Bangor boasts the state's finest arena and convention centers, an outdoor concert venue that draws tens of thousands to national-quality shows and a resurgent downtown and vibrant waterfront district.

Hollywood Casino was a key, but ultimately not the largest part, of this revitalization, and I would ask that you bear that in mind today. It was not approved by the voters with a "build it and they will come" mentality, but rather as a means for seeding a larger vision. So a critical question to ask yourselves today with the bills before you is, what is the larger vision?

Truth be told, 20 years ago regulatory restrictions across the country created a market imbalance in gaming such that people would travel some distance to gamble. For those places with gaming facilities, that meant money coming in from the outside.

That is far less true today. The proliferation of gaming in our region, including here in Maine, but also to our south, most notably in Massachusetts, casts doubt on the notion that any of the proposals before you will bring a lot of new money to our state or any particular region of it.

In Bangor, that's ok, because our resurgence isn't about, nor even dependent on, dollars imported through gaming. But it is dependent on the ongoing revenues of Hollywood Casino to help pay for our arena and convention center, even if those revenues mostly come from within Maine.

Studies that suggest this state can support further gaming expansion without disruptions to existing facilities don't pass the straight face test. We all know that, unlike 20 years ago, this market teeters on the brink of over-saturation.

I'm here today to ask that you do not dim one of the bright spots in the Maine economy – namely the emergence of the Queen City as a destination for visitors seeking entertainment and conferencing services.

Lastly, I would caution you against the political peril of taking on as legislators policy questions that have a long and history of [passionate debate and inconsistent results with voters at the ballot box. History tells us that Maine people want a direct say in whether gaming should be expanded here, and often that answer is no.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to take any questions.